

Greetings Delaware Shorebirders!

While spring seems to be taking its time getting here, we are working hard to get ready for the 2011 shorebird monitoring season. Last year will be hard to beat with the large egg densities we had early on in the season and that continued all the way through the migratory period. Hopefully this year will be the same. While those conditions were great for the birds, it made it difficult for us to catch them as some of you may remember. But with renewed energy and ideas, we will be more successful at capturing shorebirds this year! We capture the birds to monitor their condition and get weight data to evaluating their weight progression through the season. We will also be applying coded leg flags and spending time searching for those flags (resighting). This is a tremendously fun experience for those of you who haven't made it out yet. We do try to get everyone into Mispillion Harbor (the best place to do resighting) at least once. It is truly an amazing experience!

Your help is important...

The data collected during our monitoring efforts is as important now as it has ever been. In 2007 Red Knots were designated as a "Candidate" species under the USFWS's Endangered Species Act. At the time, it was given a priority level of 6. In 2008, its priority level was upgraded to a level 3, the highest a migratory species can attain. This puts the Red Knot that much closer to being designated as Threatened or Endangered. It is with the strong scientific data you helped to collect that Red Knots have been recognized to be in such peril. In addition, we are continually improving the types of data we collect and how we collect it to be at the leading edge of monitoring capabilities while insuring that management decisions are based on the best available science.

All of the work conducted and data collected by the volunteers of the DE Shorebird Project is critical to furthering our understanding of Red Knots and other shorebirds that migrate through the Bay in the spring. I am hopeful you will be interested in helping out by volunteering with the Delaware Shorebird Project this year. The success of this project and shorebird conservation in Delaware depends heavily on your help during the short migratory period. We need people to help on processing teams after a catch is made, to help resight individually marked birds, and to help with other daily aspects of the project. Basically, there is something for volunteers of all skill levels and abilities to do! If this sounds like a good time and something you would like to do, please become involved!

Details...

We have again secured the house in Slaughter Beach as a base of operations during the field season and will be there from May 3 through June 3. Limited space is available so please let me know if you would like to stay overnight so we can work to accommodate you. We work 7 days a week to collect all of the data needed during the short migratory period so there is always something to do at a time that will fit with your schedule. We do ask that you try to contribute at least 3 to 4 days to the effort. This amount of time is intended to expose you to all aspects of the project and give you an opportunity to develop your skills in resighting and banding team work. Plus, it's just plain fun!

I am happy that my talented team leaders Gregory Breese (USFWS) and Jean Woods (Delaware Museum of Natural History) will be assisting with scheduling volunteers and updating volunteers on team activities in addition to the great team leadership work they do every year! Their efforts were recognized by the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife for their efforts and dedication to the Project! The Project would not run as smoothly as it does without them!

Our online training modules are being updated slightly again this year and I will let you know when they have been finalized. We will have a short orientation when you arrive to the field station in Slaughter Beach but most of the training will be in the field when we are actually collecting data. What better way to learn than with birds on the shore or in the hand!

What to do now...

- Plan to come to the Bay! Let me know when you plan to help out. I am looking to have a team of about 10-15 volunteers per day.
- Brush up on your species ID's
- Review the training modules available on the website below once the updated versions are available.

Contact...

If you have a question and need more information or to let us know when you will be able to help, please contact me at **(302)735-8667** or by email at desshorebirds@gmail.com. We will again have a volunteer contact phone during the season and I will send that number when it is available. If you are on Facebook, do a search for Delaware Shorebird Project and "like" us! We will be posting updates there as well.

I hope to hear from you and look forward to seeing you in May!

Kevin Kalasz
DE Shorebird Project Coordinator